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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 11 February 2011 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and has the honour to inform him that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2011-2014, at elections to be held during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly in New York in May 2011.

A detailed aide memoire containing the Philippines' voluntary pledges and commitments in relation to its candidature to the Human Rights Council, for the term 2011-2014, is enclosed for reference (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 11 February 2011 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Philippines to the Human Rights Council, 2011-2014

Voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251

I. A tradition of human rights protection and promotion at the national and international levels

National policy

1. The Philippine Government attaches the greatest importance to the promotion and protection of human rights. This is reflected in the Constitution of the Philippines, which enshrines it as state policy to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights. The Constitution elaborates a Bill of Rights, devotes an article to social justice and human rights, and creates an independent Commission on Human Rights.

National institutions

2. The Presidential Human Rights Committee is the main inter-agency body of the executive branch of Government which coordinates the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations and national policies and programmes on human rights. The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines is an independent national human rights institution which monitors the Government's compliance with its human rights obligations.

Updates on key national legislation and programmes

3. The Philippines recently enacted two landmark bills, namely, the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities and the Magna Carta for Women.

4. The eradication of poverty remains the top priority of the Government, especially in the wake of global economic and financial downturns, and challenges of food security, frequent natural disasters and climate change. The Philippines mobilizes government resources to protect the most vulnerable sectors of society by increasing allocations for social welfare programmes, education, provision of emergency food and medical supplies, health services, and adequate housing and shelter.

5. The Government has enhanced capacity-building and training on human rights for government officials, law enforcement and security forces at all levels.

Influential role in the elaboration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

6. As a founding member of the United Nations and the former Commission on Human Rights, the Philippines made lasting contributions to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly on articles on the equal dignity and freedom of all human beings and non-discrimination.

International human rights instruments

7. The Philippines is a State party to eight core international human rights instruments, and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. The Philippines ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2007.

Constructive member of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary mechanisms

8. The Philippines was elected as a founding member of the Human Rights Council in 2006 and was re-elected for a second term in 2007-2010.

9. The Philippines believes that the Human Rights Council should be a partner of States and stakeholders in the promotion and protection of all human rights, with a strong focus on capacity-building and international cooperation on human rights.

10. During the first year of the Council, the Permanent Representative of the Philippines in Geneva facilitated the Working Group on methods of work and rules of procedure, producing an important segment of the Council's institution-building package as annexed to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1.

11. In June 2008, the Permanent Representative of the Philippines in Geneva was elected Vice-President of the Human Rights Council representing the Asian States.

12. Philippine experts serve on the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and the Expert Mechanisms on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Universal periodic review

13. The Philippines was one of the first countries to undergo the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council. The Philippines sent a high-level inter-agency delegation headed by the Executive Secretary of the Cabinet and Chairperson of the Presidential Human Rights Committee.

14. Fully engaging in the process in a constructive and open spirit, the Philippines had a fruitful universal periodic review and adopted most of the recommendations stemming therefrom, which provided useful input for the formulation of the Philippines second Human Rights Action Plan.

15. As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Philippine delegation in Geneva actively participates in the universal periodic review by serving on the troikas it is selected for, and making constructive comments and suggestions in the universal periodic review working group.

Cooperation with treaty monitoring bodies

16. In fulfilment of its commitment to improve its reporting system to the human rights treaty bodies, the Philippines has submitted all pending periodic reports under human rights instruments to which it is a State party. Over the past year, the Philippines presented periodic reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

17. The Philippines submitted its initial report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and presented its initial report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

18. The Philippine Government takes the concluding observations of the treaty bodies into serious consideration in the review and improvement of relevant legislation, policies and programmes, and in the formulation of its second national Human Rights Action Plan.

Contributions to international initiatives on human rights promotion and protection

19. Besides being the main sponsor of General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the Philippines is a member of the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, and co-sponsor of initiatives on the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups such as migrants, children, women, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities.

20. The Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations in New York facilitated negotiations on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples prior to its adoption by the General Assembly. The Philippines has expert members on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

21. The Philippines is a main co-sponsor of initiatives on human rights and extreme poverty and human rights and climate change. The Philippines also actively participated in and supported the Durban Review Conference [against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance].

22. Recognizing that different faiths, religions and spiritual traditions share many common values and principles which are vital to building peaceful societies, the Philippines promotes initiatives on inter-faith dialogue, which can also contribute to the promotion of human rights.

Cooperation with human rights special procedures

23. The Philippines is open to constructive dialogue and cooperation with human rights special procedures. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict recently conducted a visit to the Philippines. In 2007, the Philippines invited the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Furthermore, the Philippines is a main co-sponsor of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

24. The Philippines regularly contributes to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and gave extra contributions for the special fund of OHCHR for the promotion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

25. An Asian regional workshop on the establishment of national human rights institutions was held in the Philippines in collaboration with OHCHR and the Philippine Commission on Human Rights.

Working with national human rights institutions and civil society

26. The Philippines supported the establishment of the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

27. The Philippines will continue its commitment to support the meaningful engagement of national human rights institutions and civil society partners in the work of the Human Rights Council and in the larger goal of promoting and protecting all human rights.

28. The Philippine Government works closely with civil society at both the national and international levels on all human rights issues, in the formulation of relevant legislation, policies and programmes, and in regional and international forums.

II. Pledges and commitments

29. If re-elected to the Human Rights Council, the Philippines commits itself to:

1. Working with all States and stakeholders in a constructive manner, fostering dialogue and cooperation, to make the Human Rights Council more efficient and effective as the prime body of the United Nations mandated to promote and protect human rights.

2. Continuing to focus on the importance of bridging national, regional and international human rights goals, standards and strategies.

3. Continuing to enhance domestic implementation of all human rights treaty obligations and programmes, especially with regard to the eradication of poverty and fulfilment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

4. Continuing to be a voice for vulnerable groups, especially migrants and children, and support human rights-based approaches that address their concerns in a comprehensive, positive and practical way.

5. Continuing to be sensitive to current and emerging challenges which have an impact on human rights, such as climate change and globalization.

6. Continuing to support advancing discussions on the right to development with a view to its realization.

7. Continuing active engagement with the human rights treaty bodies, special procedures, the universal periodic review and other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council.

8. Continuing to support the important work of national human rights institutions.

9. Continuing to have meaningful interaction and cooperation with civil society stakeholders on human rights issues at both the national and the international levels.

10. Continuing to promote international initiatives on human rights, such as those on combating trafficking in persons and promoting human rights education and training, and to working closely with and supporting OHCHR in this regard.